



# The Writer's Compass

## Briefing 6: Writing and Regeneration Sarah Butler

---

This briefing sheet has been commissioned by literaturetraining and the National Association for Literature Development (NALD) <http://www.literaturedevelopment.co.uk>. It draws on materials developed for the National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE) and a workshop run for NALD in autumn 2009.

---

### About the author

Sarah Butler writes novels and short fiction. She has been published in anthologies, journals and online. She has held various writing residencies, including writer-in-residence on the Central line for Art on the Underground. Sarah lives in London and runs UrbanWords, a literature consultancy which specialises in projects using creative writing as a way to explore and question our relationship to place. You can find out more at [www.sarahbutler.org.uk](http://www.sarahbutler.org.uk) and [www.urbanwords.org.uk](http://www.urbanwords.org.uk)

---

### Contents:

- 1 Introduction: What is regeneration anyway, and how can writing/literature development work within it?
- 2 Literature and Regeneration – some case studies and ideas
- 3 Getting your head around Regeneration – a beginner's guide to the key players, learning the lingo, and getting started

---

## Part One: Introduction

The aim of this resource is to provide an introduction to, and some tools to navigate, this complex landscape. Rather than get caught up in a discussion of the politics of the word 'regeneration', I will use it to refer to the act of changing (with the aim of improving) places – whether that be through the creation of new places (houses, public realm etc.) or the refurbishment, or reconfiguration, of existing areas.

---

### What is regeneration anyway?

'Regeneration involves improving disadvantaged areas and the lives of people who live and work there'

(Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2003)

'Regeneration encompasses poverty reduction, reducing a community's vulnerability, enhancing an area's assets, and empowering poor people'

(Centre for Public Policy for Regions, 2007)

'Urban regeneration involves a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental conditions of an area'

(Professor Peter Roberts, Chair of the Homes and Communities Agency Academy)

Regeneration is a vast and complex area of work, which spans physical developments, social cohesion, economic development, sustainability, community development and so on.

A distinction can be made between Regeneration (the improvement of an existing area that is currently deprived/unsuccessful) and Development (the creation of new urban areas, such as housing developments on brownfield sites etc.), although the two terms are often used interchangeably.

#### **A brief overview of Regeneration and Culture**

It is now widely accepted that culture in its broadest sense has a significant role to play in the regeneration of our towns and cities.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, former industrial areas started to turn towards culture and creativity, recognising these as aspects of an emerging service and knowledge economy. As a result, culture became a key part of city-marketing as well as production. Policy changes resulted in investment in cultural infrastructure, and people started talking about 'culture-led regeneration', epitomised by flagship initiatives in cities including Newcastle and Gateshead, Manchester, Sheffield, Birmingham etc.

The definition of culture began to broaden to encompass anything from high art to local traditions and ways of life, in response to criticisms about elitism. Many of the flagship initiatives were criticised for being planned top-down, with limited benefits for local communities.

There has been an increasing interest in culture's instrumental value in addressing wider regeneration objectives. In the UK, the Local Government White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' places an emphasis on local government to find locally-led solutions to serve the needs of local communities. The local government agenda has also resulted in a 'National Performance Framework', which distributes funding against performance measures for public local services. Overall, these shifts have resulted in efforts to demonstrate culture's impact on issues such as social cohesion, civic participation, health and well being, individual attainment; and economic development. With the reduction in cultural budgets within local authorities, cultural activity is now often funded through other council departments – children and young people, Primary Care Trusts, youth offending teams, environment / open spaces etc.

We are now in a situation where the role of culture in place-making and the wider social aspects that come under the umbrella of 'regeneration' is recognised and widely documented. If you are interested in exploring the role of culture in regeneration further, and reading some key documents and strategies that make the case, here are some suggestions to get you started:

### **Further Reading:**

[http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/raising\\_standards/improvement/~/\\_media/Files/pdf/2008/delivering\\_local\\_area\\_agreements\\_london.ashx](http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/raising_standards/improvement/~/_media/Files/pdf/2008/delivering_local_area_agreements_london.ashx) This document is London focused, but makes the argument and offers case studies for how culture can address local government priorities, such as Children and Young People, Stronger and safer communities, Adult health and wellbeing

<http://www.living-places.org.uk/> Living Places is an alliance of public bodies who advocate for the role of culture within everyday life and looks to embed culture at a strategic level. The website has regional info and case studies, and a Culture and Sport planning toolkit.

<http://skills.homesandcommunities.co.uk/theme/culture> The Homes and Communities Agency website has a section looking at culture and regeneration.

<http://www.visionarythurrock.org.uk/docs/home/map.html> Thurrock: A Visionary Brief in the Thames Gateway was written by General Public Agency in 2004 and is an early example of a strategic approach to regeneration that brought an international perspective to local, regional and national policy debates around cultural practice in regeneration. It describes itself as 'an innovative process for planning and development in the Thames Gateway. It has demonstrated that if culture is interpreted widely, if regeneration is addressed holistically and if a creative process is embedded in planning and decision-making, then it is possible to create truly sustainable communities'.

<http://www.charleslandry.com/> Charles Landry describes himself as 'an authority on creativity and its uses and how city futures are shaped by paying attention to the culture of a place'. He has written several influential books about the role of culture and creativity in city and place-making.

---

## How can writing and literature development work in this context?

The first section of this resource details some ideas and gives examples of the ways in which writing and literature development can meaningfully engage with regeneration.

It covers creative consultation, public art, community development, communication, and working on design teams. These ideas are intended as starting points, rather than a finite checklist of possibilities.

Regeneration is a complex but rich area. It offers a way in to work that addresses the social aspects of regeneration, including working with young people, community development and involvement. There is also a lot of scope for writers and literature organisations to engage with public art.

I hope that this resource will encourage you to be confident to try things out and find a way of working that suits you.

---

## Part Two: Literature and Regeneration: Some case-studies and ideas

### Creative Writing and Consultation

Consultation is an important element of any regeneration scheme. Local authorities are legally obliged to consult with local communities about regeneration projects. There are really interesting opportunities here for artists to work with communities to get past people's immediate responses to a place and really explore and unpick the realities of an area, and imagine the possibilities for change.



#### **Mini-case study: *Snug and Outdoor***

Chris Meade is a writer who works for artists and playground designers *Snug and Outdoor* at the consultative stages of their projects. Chris says: Ask a child to say what they want in their new playground and they'll probably say swings and a slide, and can they be blue, or red, or green, please. In other words they will tell you about a playground they have already seen. Enable them to think creatively about place, what makes them feel safe, excited, scared,

playful, etc. and you come up with much more interesting ideas about what a playground could be.

Chris uses group poems as a way to help groups of children and other stakeholders use their imagination and express their ideas. Hattie Coppard, Director of *Snug and Outdoor* is adamant about the benefits of creative consultation. 'It's about exploring imagination, not gripes', she says. 'It's about getting people to express something they haven't imagined yet.'

*UrbanWords* commissioned Chris to write about his creative consultation work. The article, *A Place That Makes You Go Ahhhhh.....* is free to download from the *A Place For Words* website: <http://www.urbanwords.org.uk/aplaceforwords/articles%20chris.shtml>

Image © *Snug and Outdoor*

#### **Places to go for further ideas and inspiration:**

- A section of *A Place For Words* outlining thoughts about writers working on creative consultation projects: <http://www.urbanwords.org.uk/aplaceforwords/creative-consultation.shtml>
- A case study on a creative consultation project in Hackney Wick with the writer Paul Sheppard: <http://www.urbanwords.org.uk/aplaceforwords/case-study-hackneywick.shtml>
- Involve run projects and do research into participation etc. [www.involve.org.uk](http://www.involve.org.uk)
- A toolkit for creative consultation from GroundWork East Midlands: <http://www.creativeregeneration.com/index.asp?page=75>
- A Kirklees based organization who do creative consultation: <http://www.loca.co.uk/htm/creativeconsultation.htm>

## Public Art Commissions

Public art commissions offer exciting possibilities for writers to engage in creating new writing for specific places. Commissions can range from temporary light projections of text to words carved into wood or stone.



### **Mini case-study: Westpark**

The poet W.N. Herbert worked with developer Tony Cooper from *Bussey and Armstrong Projects* on a new residential development in Westpark, Darlington. His brief was to write a poetry plan for the site and develop ideas and writing that could be permanently placed within the site's public park.

The results have been astounding, and the development has won numerous awards.

W.N. Herbert wrote poetry that responded to the history and ecology of the site and the local area and this work has been embedded into the site's landscape. W.N. Herbert named each road and wrote rhyming couplets, celebrating specific incidents and stories from the area's past, which are printed on each road sign. His poetry curves around the arches of the shopping complex, it lines the three bridges that form the entrances to the park, is cut out of corten steel in a magnificent centrepiece in the park, and is cast in iron as part of the three stone triptychs that mark the highest points of the park. He also wrote the new school motto and named the local pub. The development, which could have been a soulless development on a former chemical plant, is utterly unique.

### **Places to go for further ideas and inspiration:**

Linda France and Sarah Butler have compiled a guide for writers interested in public art (<http://www.nawe.co.uk/metadot/index.pl?id=42716&isa=Category&op=show>) which includes a wide range of images of text-based public art, ideas, weblinks and a reading list.

UrbanWords commissioned a piece by Linda France: *Writing in Three Dimensions* which examines the differences between writing for the page and writing for a place. The article is available free to download here:

<http://www.urbanwords.org.uk/aplaceforwords/articles%20linda.shtml>

A Place For Words has a bank of case studies about writing-based public art commissions, with permanent and temporary outcomes:

<http://www.urbanwords.org.uk/aplaceforwords/case-studies.shtml>

Archived information on public art from the Poetry Society:

<http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/content/archives/publicart/>

Websites showcasing individual artists' work/specific projects:

[www.alecfinlay.com](http://www.alecfinlay.com)

[www.lindafrance.co.uk](http://www.lindafrance.co.uk)

[www.gordonyoung.net/projects.html](http://www.gordonyoung.net/projects.html) (visual artist who does a lot of work with text)

[www.michaelfairfax.co.uk/poems.html](http://www.michaelfairfax.co.uk/poems.html) (visual artist who does a lot of work with text)

[www.41places.org/](http://www.41places.org/) non-fiction installation project by Unmadeup

## Community Development

Sustainable communities is a big theme within Regeneration. There is an increasing recognition that the success of a place has a lot to do with the people who live in it – how they interact with each other, how they feel about the place, their skills and creativity. Writing-based projects can (and do) operate very effectively in this environment.



### ***Mini case-study: Batley Family Encounters Project***

*Encounters* artists, Ruth Ben-Tovim and Trish O'Shea were commissioned by *Loca* to create a participatory arts project exploring stories of childhood from families in Batley, West Yorkshire. The project was commissioned on behalf of Batley Locality Children's Centre and aimed to create stronger links between the Children's Centre and local families.

Working with associate artist Carry Franklin, the artists created a mobile street stall, which they toured around different parts of the area to engage with local people. Using a range of prompts including maps, suitcases, toys and questions, they collected stories about growing up, family journeys and inheritance from hundreds of passers by. Participants wrote the story of their family's journey to live in Batley on luggage labels, drew framed 'family portraits' and added their memories to an enlarged map of Batley. The market stall became a mobile and evolving exhibition, filled with participants' material. In each location, Batley Locality Children's Centre staff also set up a stall to make connections with participants. The artists also worked in two schools in the area, creating an activity kit for teachers to collect stories, memories and ideas from children and their parents.

At the end of the project, the artists created a legacy publication, working with graphic designers DED, to present the photographs, stories, family portraits and maps they had gathered. Every participant was given a free copy. The wealth of stories and images collected throughout the project was exhibited at Batley Library and later at Kirklees Media Centre, Huddersfield.

*Image © Encounters*

### **Places to go for further ideas and inspiration:**

- <http://www.sharrowencounters.org.uk> More information about Encounters' projects
- <http://skills.homesandcommunities.co.uk/theme/community> The Homes and Communities Agency has a section on their website looking at community development and regeneration, and if you're really keen, they run a free online course about the sustainable communities agenda:  
<http://skills.homesandcommunities.co.uk/understanding>

## Effective communication about regeneration

Writers are communicators. They navigate language. They find ways to express complex ideas in beautiful, efficient and effective combinations of words. Regeneration poses a particular challenge and opportunity when it comes to language and communication. It sometimes feels as though the languages of the different partners and stake-holders are so far removed from each other that communication is impossible, and yet communication is essential, in order for whole communities to be able to understand, respond to, and participate in the regeneration of their places.



### ***Mini case-study: Barking: A Model Town Centre***

*UrbanWords* and *muf Architecture/Art* commissioned poet and novelist Aoife Mannix to run a series of workshops with residents of Barking, East London, exploring imagined occupations of the new developments currently being built in the borough. People aged 10-90 talked, wrote, and explored memories and aspirations of home, health, markets and retail. Aoife Mannix and Sarah Butler brought together words written and spoken by the participants to create texts to accompany architects' models in the Design for London commissioned exhibition, *Barking: A Model Town Centre*.

Throughout the exhibition, Aoife Mannix worked with visitors to explore and capture their memories of and

hopes for Barking.

## Places to go for further ideas and inspiration:

- A section of *A Place For Words* outlining thoughts about the potential role of writers in communicating about place:  
<http://www.urbanwords.org.uk/aplaceforwords/communication-and-articulation.shtml>
- *The Dreaming City: Glasgow 2020 and the Power of Mass Imagination* is a really interesting project run by the think tank Demos which took the idea of story as crucial to our understanding of place and ran with it. The 18 month project engaged people from across the city in telling alternative stories for their city. The book of the project can be downloaded for free from Demos' website:  
<http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/thedreamingcity>

## Working on a Design Team

Working on the design team is an accepted role for artists working within regeneration projects. It basically means that an artist is engaged to be part of the design team, which is the group of professionals who manage and deliver a particular scheme. The idea (usually) is that the artist is not given a specific brief to make something, but instead takes part in discussions, analyses, questions, and contributes their own creative thinking to the design process. Often these roles do result in a piece of work. For instance, the artist Nayan Kulkarni was commissioned to work on the design team for the retail development, Cabot Circus in Bristol, and ended up designing the roof: [www.insitearts.com/projects/cabotcircus](http://www.insitearts.com/projects/cabotcircus).

I have never come across a writer who has fulfilled this role in the same way that visual artists have. W.N.Herbert's work in Westpark, Darlington (see page 6) comes close, in that he worked closely with the developer, wrote a poetry strategy for the entire development, and has influenced the choice of materials used in the buildings.

Denna Jones is a non-fiction writer who has done interesting work with DLA Architecture at the planning stages of their projects. For more information on Denna's work: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/dennajones/sets/72157604376967579/>

There's an excellent article by Sam Wilkinson talking about how artists can work with design teams on capital projects on publicartonline (a great resource): [http://www.publicartonline.org.uk/resources/rescollaboration/collaboration\\_consultant.php](http://www.publicartonline.org.uk/resources/rescollaboration/collaboration_consultant.php)

---

## Part Three: Getting Your Head Around Regeneration

There's no getting away from the fact that Regeneration is a vast and complex area. This section is designed to give you a basic overview of who and what's involved, and some pointers towards further resources and information if you want to look at things in more depth.

Please note that the main focus is on regeneration structures in England, although much of the information will be applicable elsewhere. For more specific information about regeneration in other parts of the UK visit:

- **Wales:** <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/regeneration/?lang=en>
- **Scotland:** <http://www.scotregen.co.uk/> and <http://scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/regeneration>
- **Northern Ireland:** [http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/urcdg-urban\\_regeneration.htm](http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/urcdg-urban_regeneration.htm)

---

### The key players:

#### Central Government

It all starts at the top. Central Government develops national policies looking at how towns and cities in the UK should develop in very broad brushstrokes (e.g. Thames Gateway Regional Plan 2006, Sustainable Communities Agenda). They also develop national planning guidance. [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

The Infrastructure Planning Commission is a new independent body which makes decisions on applications for nationally significant infrastructure projects, including railways, large wind farms, power stations, reservoirs, airports and sewage treatment works. [www.infrastructure.independent.gov.uk](http://www.infrastructure.independent.gov.uk)

#### Regional Government

Central government policies are then given further detail and regional specificity.

#### Regional Development Agencies

The nine Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) set up in the English regions are non-departmental public bodies. Their primary role is as a strategic driver of regional economic development in their region. The RDAs' aim is to:

- co-ordinate regional economic development and regeneration
- enable the regions to improve their relative competitiveness
- reduce the imbalances that exist within and between regions

Find yours here: <http://www.englandsrdas.com/>

**(Stop Press:** The new government has pledged to disband RDAs by 2012. You'll still find useful information online, but it's worth keeping an eye out for potential new bodies/policy.)

Regions will also have, or be working towards, a **Regional Integrated Strategy**, which brings together economic, transport, housing development plans etc. across the whole region.

**Development Corporations** are organizations set up to deliver development places for specific geographical areas (which may sit across other borough boundaries) e.g.

London Thames Gateway Development Corporation: [www.ltgdc.org.uk](http://www.ltgdc.org.uk)

North Northants Development Company: [www.nndev.co.uk](http://www.nndev.co.uk)

## Local Government

Local authorities will create local plans which interpret regional and national priorities and reflect their own priorities and concerns.

Each local authority will have a **Local Development Framework**, which includes the **Local Development Plan**, the authority's **Core Strategy** and a **Statement of Community Involvement**.

**Area Action Plans** are developed for specific areas designated for significant change.

Local authorities will lead on regeneration schemes that are happening on publicly owned land through their planning department. It is local authorities who negotiate **Section 106** agreements (see below).

Some local authorities will have specific regeneration teams, but it depends on how the council is configured. Other local authority departments/teams are also involved in the wider process of regeneration: Children and Young Peoples Services, Arts and Culture, Environment/open spaces, Economic Development etc.

## Developers

Developers are the people/organizations who take on a specific site, raise the finance, and orchestrate the development. Sometimes they are appointed by local government to manage a scheme on their behalf, sometimes they will purchase and develop private sites.

A development company answers to its shareholders, so they need to be convinced of the value that cultural activity will add to their schemes. Some will be more interested than others, and profit will always be a consideration for them, but developers are increasingly working with artists and arts organizations to strengthen their projects. Examples include:

- Argent (<http://www.argentgroup.plc.uk/>) supports an arts programme at King's Cross ([www.artatkingcross.com](http://www.artatkingcross.com))
- Bussey and Armstrong Projects <http://www.busseyarmstrong.co.uk/> have worked with a poet on their Westpark Development and supported community engagement projects through New Writing North
- Igloo Regeneration (<http://www.igloo.uk.net>) takes a real interest in arts and culture and how it can support and improve their schemes

## Architects

Each scheme may have one or more architects. They will be brought in to design and manage the construction of building/s and/or public space/s. Architects are members of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA: [www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com)). RIBA building stages are used by architects, engineers and contractors to plan the building project. Building projects exist in 5 distinct stages defined by RIBA. These are further subdivided into 11 sub stages, each of which is given a letter from A-L. The main stages are Preparation (sub stages A and B), Design (C, D and E), Pre-Construction (F, G and H), Construction (J and K), and Use (L).

## Contractors

Once the architect designs have been agreed, contractors will be brought in to deliver the construction.

## Communities

Community is a contested term but is generally used to describe the people who live or work in a specific area. Often arts and cultural projects focus on the community development/consultation/participation side of regeneration.

---

## Other bodies/organizations

**CABE:** A national body which promotes design and architecture to raise the standard of the built environment. [www.cabe.org.uk](http://www.cabe.org.uk). CABE's Engaging Places website looks specifically at education and the built environment: [www.engagingplaces.org.uk](http://www.engagingplaces.org.uk)

**Design For London:** A regional design resource for London, concentrating on ensuring a design-led approach to development in London. Part of the London Development Agency (LDA) and working on behalf of the Mayor of London. [www.designforlondon.gov.uk](http://www.designforlondon.gov.uk)

**Homes and Communities Agency:** The Homes and Communities Agency is the national housing and regeneration delivery agency for England:  
<http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk>

**Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders:** Housing Market Renewal (HMR) is a programme to rebuild housing markets and communities in parts of the North and the Midlands where demand for housing is relatively weak and where there has been a significant decline in population, dereliction, poor services and poor social conditions as a result. There are nine sub-regional projects. A map of the pathfinder areas is available here: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/gif/152311.gif> and links to their websites from here: <http://www.englishpartnerships.co.uk/pathfinders.htm>. Please note that currently some of these Pathfinders are changing and many have a more specific economic development role.

**Housing Associations:** Housing associations often take on the development and/or management of social housing schemes, and can be interesting partners to work with.

---

## Learning the Lingo

Regeneration is a complex area, filled with jargon. Below are a few of the most common terms with a brief explanation. The Architecture Centre Network has a great jargon buster, if you want to interpret other terms you come across:  
<http://www.architecturecentre.net/docs/news/resources/>

**Area Action Plan:** A type of Development Plan Document focused upon a specific location or an area subject to conservation or significant change (for example, major regeneration).

**Developer:** An organization investing in a construction project intending that the building will be used by another organization. The process needs to give the developer a profit in exchange for the up-front funding and risk involved.

**Development:** In the built environment the term 'development' has several meanings:

- the process of moving a project from feasibility to design
- the actual process of building
- the extent or type of building on a site, as expressed in 'over-development'.

**Development Plan:** A document setting out the local planning authority's policies and proposals for the development and use of land and buildings in the authority's area.

**Development Plan Documents (DPDs):** Development Plan Documents are prepared by local planning authorities and outline the key development goals of the local development framework. They include the core strategy and, where needed, area action plans. There will also be an adopted proposals map which illustrates the spatial extent of policies that must be prepared and maintained to accompany all DPDs.

**Local Area Agreement (LAA):** A three year agreement, based on local Sustainable Community Strategies, that sets out the priorities for a local area agreed between Central Government, represented by the Government Office (GO), and a local area, represented by the local authority and other key partners **through Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)**.

**Local Development Documents (LDDs):** These include Development Plan Documents (which form part of the statutory development plan) and Supplementary Planning Documents (which do not form part of the statutory development plan). LDDs collectively deliver the spatial planning strategy for the local planning authority's area.

**Local Development Framework (LDF):** The Local Development Framework (LDF) is a non-statutory term used to describe a folder of documents, which includes all the local planning authority's local development documents. An LDF is composed of:

- Development Plan Documents (which form part of the statutory development plan)
- Supplementary Planning Documents

The local development framework will also comprise:

- the Statement of Community Involvement
- the Local Development Scheme
- the Annual Monitoring Report

**Masterplan:** A type of planning brief outlining the preferred usage of land and the overall approach to the layout of a developer. Provides detailed guidance for subsequent planning applications.

**Planning permission:** Permission that must be obtained from the local authority before construction starts on most projects. It controls the proposed use, how much of the site is covered, the size of the building, site access, external landscape and parking and conformity with existing local plans. If permission is not granted, an appeal may be heard by a public enquiry and determined by a planning inspector. The Secretary of State for the Environment makes the final decision.

**Section 106 Agreement:** A legal agreement under section 106 of the 1990 Town & Country Planning Act. Section 106 agreements are legal agreements between a planning authority and a developer, or undertakings offered unilaterally by a developer, that ensure that certain extra works related to a development are undertaken, e.g. local road improvements. Sometimes Section 106 agreements divert funds towards arts and community projects.

**Sustainable Communities:** *Sustainable Communities: Building For The Future* was a central government document published in 2003, setting out a vision for sustainable communities, and addressing the issues of housing shortage, climate change and community cohesion.

---

## Getting started

Starting off trying to navigate the regeneration landscape as a literature organization or writer can feel daunting, but there are plenty of people and resources out there that can help you.

### Do your homework

It's worth reading relevant key documents that relate to the area you work or want to work in. This will allow you to get an overview of what the local priorities are and enable you to see how they might match with your own ambitions. Some of these documents can be a bit dense and involved, so try to go for summaries! Here are a few starting points:

#### Central Government policy:

- <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/sustainablecommunitiesbuilding> You can download a summary report of Sustainable Communities: Building For The Future (2003), and look at regional action plans.
- <http://www.hcaacademy.co.uk/sustainable-communities> also offers a good overview of the sustainable communities agenda. The HCA academy offers free online 'Nutshell' courses which cover the sustainable communities agenda in detail.

#### Regional context and policy:

- Visit your Regional Development Agency website: <http://www.englandsrdas.com/> (NB: The new government has pledged to disband RDAs by 2010.)
- Find out if there are any Development Corporations that work in your area and familiarise yourself with their priorities and work. The best place to start is the internet – Google 'development corporation' and your region/town/area.

#### Local context and policy:

- Visit your local authority's website. If you're unsure where to start, search for terms like 'regeneration', 'urban/housing renewal', 'sustainable communities', 'local development framework', 'area action plan', 'environment' and 'community'.
- Find out what else is going on in the area you are looking to work in. You might find useful allies and partnerships for projects. An internet search is a good starting point. Keep an eye on newspaper articles and letters pages, web forums and local radio. Find out if there are local resident associations or community groups. Once you start talking to people involved locally they will connect you with other relevant people and organizations.

### Work out what your offer is

Take a bit of time to think about what you want to do and why, and how it fits in with the agendas and policies that are driving regeneration in the area you want to work in. If you can go into meetings with a strong sense of what you can offer and how you can help regeneration partners achieve their objectives, you'll be starting off from a strong position.

A word of caution though, it's also important to know what you are not prepared to do. Regeneration is inevitably political and contentious, so be aware of that when you develop projects in this arena. Regeneration projects tend to involve a wide range of partners, so good partnership working is essential to avoid getting into difficulties further along the line.

## **Talk to people**

As with any work, networks and contacts are important. Get to know your local authority: arts, planning, economic development, environment and open spaces, children and young people's services etc. If you already work in a local authority, then develop contacts in different departments.

If there's a specific development you want to work with you can try contacting the developer or architect directly, but it's worth being clear about what you're offering – they are often extremely busy and very focused on results and specific projects rather than grand ideas!

There are often key individuals who drive regeneration schemes (or opposition to them). Identifying these individuals (through research, newspapers/online forums etc.) can give you a route in.

## **Be prepared for it to take time**

Regeneration is a long-term process. As an example, the current King's Cross development has already been 10 years in the planning and is scheduled for completion 20 years from now. Even schemes that seem very small (a few houses, or an individual building) will take anything upwards of two to three years to realise.

It can be difficult to move quickly and to find the right time to get involved. If you are already connected to, and working in, a particular area that can stand you in good stead, as you will already be connected into, and aware of, potential new schemes. Develop a good relationship with your local authority – they are an excellent source of information and contacts, particularly about new schemes that aren't yet visible.

Be aware that you will need to invest time and resources in partnership building and project development and recognise that things move slowly.

## **Funding**

Literature and regeneration projects can be funded through a variety of sources, including Section 106 agreements (see page 13). Local authority regeneration teams and arts teams sometimes have access to, or knowledge of, specific pots of funding so it's worth building a relationship with them. Regeneration projects are also often funded through different streams of funding, including parks and open spaces, crime reduction, young people etc.

The following web-links list funding pots with a specific focus on regeneration:

- <http://www.publicartonline.org.uk/resources/practicaladvice/funding/funding.php>
- <http://www.regen.net/resources/funding/byLocation/3906/uk-wide/>

## **Copyright**

As with any project where you are commissioned/are commissioning new work, you will want to consider copyright issues.

If employed as a freelancer, the writer is the first owner of the copyright of their work. If they are employed and make the work in the course of their employment, the employer will be the first copyright holder.

Copyright ownership can be assigned (made over completely to someone else) or licensed (where the ownership doesn't change, but someone else is given permission to use the work for specific purposes and for a specific length of time).

You'll need a written and signed contract for any assignment or license of copyright. The contract will need to clearly state:

- who has copyright ownership and how they will be credited
- what specific uses of the work are covered by the contract
- the system for permissions, payment and credits for further use.

*The Writers' and Artists' Yearbook*, published annually by A & C Black Publishing, has articles on British and US copyright and British libel law.

---

## Tips for Writers

*[This section draws on a companion resource introducing writers to the field of public art, commissioned by NAWA, and written by myself and the poet Linda France. You can access the whole resource at <http://www.nawe.co.uk>]*

There are opportunities for writers working in any genre to find work within the area of regeneration. You don't need to be hugely high profile. As with any kind of work/commission, the more you do, the more you're known and the more you will be approached to do similar projects. However, there are ways of getting started.

It's worth putting energy into getting the measure of your own region, making contact with local public art commissioners and arts officers within the local authorities. If they don't know you're around and interested, they won't approach you! Some commissions are advertised and some arts officers, for instance, have email newsletters that offer details of commissions.

If you have the time and energy, it is possible to generate your own projects i.e. approach funders such as Arts Council England or local authorities with a project you particularly want to do. This can be a good way to get started, but do bear in mind that you will need to spend a significant amount of (unpaid) time developing the project and raising the funds. There are a couple of examples of writer-generated projects on the A Place For Words website:

- <http://www.urbanwords.org.uk/aplaceforwords/case-study-almostanisland.shtml>
- <http://www.urbanwords.org.uk/aplaceforwords/case-study-estuary.shtml>

### Places to look for opportunities:

- Regional literature and arts agencies e.g. in North East England – New Writing North, Grit & Pearl, Inspire, Arts UK
- Local councils
- Development corporations – these are government-funded development bodies with a remit to deliver regional regeneration e.g. [www.ltgdc.org.uk](http://www.ltgdc.org.uk), [www.nndev.co.uk](http://www.nndev.co.uk), [www.wndc.org.uk](http://www.wndc.org.uk)
- University/College art departments (with a strong Public Art element): e.g. [www.intersectionspublicart.org.uk](http://www.intersectionspublicart.org.uk)
- Artists' journals e.g. AN, Aesthetica

- [www.architecturecentre.net](http://www.architecturecentre.net) – news section
- [www.publicartonline.org.uk](http://www.publicartonline.org.uk) – their ‘what’s new’ section has information on commissions

### People and places to approach:

- Literature festivals e.g. *Off The Shelf*: [www.offtheshelf.org.uk](http://www.offtheshelf.org.uk)
- Artists who have a track record of working with writers
- Literature development organizations e.g. The Poetry Society
- New initiatives – make links with cultural projects that are happening in your area. Get networking – tell people what you are interested in doing.

### Places to see what’s happening:

- [www.urbanwords.org.uk/aplaceforwords](http://www.urbanwords.org.uk/aplaceforwords) – has ideas on how writers can work in regeneration, a bank of case studies, and a series of articles relating to the area
- [www.ixia-info.com](http://www.ixia-info.com) – Ixia is a think tank for public art. The site has useful thinking pieces, research etc. and they also run a programme of events and training.
- [www.publicartonline.org.uk](http://www.publicartonline.org.uk) – has a wealth of case studies and resources around public art
- [www.shapingplace.ning.com](http://www.shapingplace.ning.com) – a networking site run by UrbanWords to encourage debate and thinking around writing and place
- [www.alecfinlay.com](http://www.alecfinlay.com) – wide-ranging work of a poet/artist active in the field
- [www.lindafrance.co.uk](http://www.lindafrance.co.uk) – Linda France has done numerous text and public art commissions

### Training opportunities

It’s worth keeping an eye open for training opportunities in this area. Mentoring and shadowing is always a useful way in. You can approach specific writers (or architects/public artists etc.) individually, or look for mentoring/shadowing schemes in your own area. Websites like [www.ixia-info.com](http://www.ixia-info.com) and [www.publicartonline.org.uk](http://www.publicartonline.org.uk) occasionally have information about training programmes.

There are also some specific university-based courses that touch on this field of work:

- 3D Poetry – a short course in Poetry in Public Spaces at Newcastle University – led by Linda France. Contact [melanie.birch@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:melanie.birch@ncl.ac.uk)
- MA Performance Writing – a course run by Falmouth University, operating out of the Arnolfini in Bristol from 2010: <http://www.falmouth.ac.uk/201/courses-7/postgraduate-courses-43/performance-writing-ma-1688.html>
- Westminster University is planning an Creative Writing MA in Writing the City: <http://www.westminster.ac.uk/schools/humanities/postgraduate/english-and-linguistics/ma-creative-writing>

### How to apply/make a proposal

You might apply for a commission on your own or pair up with a visual artist (or performer/musician/film maker etc.) who will ‘realise’ your writing. Either way, it’s useful to show images, either of work you’ve already done, or pieces that particularly inspire you.

Other tips include:

- build up a portfolio of past collaborative work, including images (and inspirations)
- create a strong design proposal, focusing on simplicity and visual impact, emphasising practicality, cost-effectiveness and durability (if applying with a visual artist)
- a professionally presented visualisation of the scheme is invaluable – either digital or hard copy. A clear image is more persuasive than an A4 page of text.

## **Insurance**

As with other literature projects that involve workshops, performances etc. you will need public liability insurance. There might be some situations where you also need professional indemnity cover. Make sure you know what kind of insurance is required at the beginning of any contract. There is some really helpful advice on publicartonline:

<http://www.publicartonline.org.uk/resources/practicaladvice/adviceartists/liability.php>

## **Payment**

As with any project/commission, the fee will vary depending on the project budget, the commissioner, etc. Fees tend to be comparable with other writing and community/arts projects (at a rough guesstimate between £150-300 per day)

## **Other Resources:**

[www.showcase.hcaacademy.co.uk](http://www.showcase.hcaacademy.co.uk) – a bank of case studies of projects/schemes supporting regeneration and sustainable communities. You can search by region (and internationally) which can help you build up a picture of what's already happening in your area.

[www.publicartonline.org.uk](http://www.publicartonline.org.uk) – a wealth of case studies and resources around public art

[www.ixia-info.com](http://www.ixia-info.com) – Ixia is a think tank for public art, the site has useful thinking pieces, research etc. and they also run a programme of events and training.

[www.urbanwords.org.uk/aplaceforwords](http://www.urbanwords.org.uk/aplaceforwords) – a site run by UrbanWords which looks specifically at how writers can work within regeneration contexts. The site has a growing bank of case studies and downloadable articles on related topics.

[www.shapingplace.ning.com](http://www.shapingplace.ning.com) – a social-network site run by UrbanWords bringing together people interested in writing and urban change

[www.theplacemakingmovement.ning.com](http://www.theplacemakingmovement.ning.com) – a network of Placemakers organized by Project for Public Spaces, enabling discussion, ideas and networking

---

## Some final thoughts

Regeneration, ultimately, is about places and people; it's about trying to improve the experience of place. Yes, there are politics; yes, sometimes it all seems pretty cynical and more concerned with money than society; yes, one person's idea of improvement might not be the same as another's but there is real scope in this arena for the arts to play a role, to create exciting new work, and to make a genuine contribution to society.

One thing this resource has not touched on is the creative industries, and their role and significance within the regeneration agenda. If you are particularly interested in this area (perhaps in relation to managing/establishing literature venues or advocating for the role of culture in society and the economy) then [www.living-places.org.uk](http://www.living-places.org.uk) is a great place to start.

I hope this resource gives you a not-too-intimidating way into the field of Regeneration, and some ideas about how you might choose to operate within this context. I would be very interested to hear about past or future projects and am always looking for new case studies for A Place For Words [www.urbanwords.org.uk/aplaceforwords](http://www.urbanwords.org.uk/aplaceforwords). So please feel free to get in touch: [sarah@urbanwords.org.uk](mailto:sarah@urbanwords.org.uk)

© Sarah Butler  
July 2010

**A literaturetraining / National Association for Literature Development co-commission**